



N° 44. Monday, May 8, 1727.

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Ut lapsu graviore ruant.



HAVE already had Occasion more than once to mention VILLARS, the first great Duke of *Buckingham*, that absolute Minister and Favourite of King *James* and King *Charles* the First; who was such an amazing *Comet* of Fame, Power, Fortune and Honour, as hath not been since seen in our Hemisphere; and, it is to be hoped, will never be seen again! But I was induced, for many Reasons, to promise my Readers some farther Account of the Rise, Character and Conduct of that extraordinary great Man; and I think no Time can be more proper to do it, than the present.

I shall not say much of his *Birth* and *Extraction*, which was rather *obscure* than *illustrious*, if compared to that vast Height of Power, to which he afterwards rose; being only the younger Son of a *private Country Gentleman*, though of an antient Family. But being endowed, by Nature, with a very graceful Person and brought up, by the singular Fondness of his Mother, in a manner, which naturally led him to Court, He soon drew upon himself the Eyes of a Prince, who, of all wise Men living, it seems, was the most delighted and taken with handsome Persons and with fine Cloaths.

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he enjoy'd, and the first lucky Step to all his future Grandeur; *since by This He was, of course, obliged to be much in the Royal Presence; and so admitted to that Conversation and Discourse, with which that Prince always abounded at his Meals.*

"He acted very few Weeks (as my Lord Clarendon informs us) upon this Stage, when he mounted higher; and being knighted, without any other Qualifications, He was at the same time made Gentleman of the Bed chamber and Knight of the Order of the Garter; and, in a short Time, (very short for such a prodigious Ascent) He was made a Baron, a Viscount, an Earl, a Marquess, and became Lord High Admiral of England, Lord Warden of the Cinque-Ports, Master of the Horse, and entirely disposed of all the Graces of the King, in conferring all the Honours and all the Offices of three Kingdoms without a Rival; in dispensing whereof, He was guided more by the Rules of Appetite, than of Judgment; and so exalted almost ALL of his own numerous Family and Dependants; whose greatest Merit was their Alliance to him; which equally offended the ancient Nobility and the People of all Conditions; who saw the Flowers of the Crown every Day fading and withered; whilst the De-measnes and the Revenue thereof were sacrificed to the enriching a private Family, (how well soever originally extracted) scarce ever heard of before to the Nation; and the Expences of the Court so vast and unlimited, that they had a sad Prospect of that Poverty and Necessity, which afterwards beset the Crown, almost to the Ruin of it.

Being thus advanced to the highest Pinnacle of Fortune, and consequently surrounded with a Crowd of abject Flatterers and Sycophants; some of whom (and particularly no less a Man than Sir Edward Coke) blasphemously called him, *our Saviour*. He began to shew himself in his proper Colours; so that from the

the whole Series and Spirit of his Conduct, we may easily trace his just Character.

He was a Man of such immoderate and insolent Ambition, that not content with all the *Power* He enjoy'd, and all the *Favours, Titles* and *beneficial Employments*, which were heap'd, in so extravagant a Manner, on *Himself*, his *Relations*, and *Dependants*; He could not bear to see any of his Fellow-subjects (though of the *best Families*, the *greatest Abilities*, or the most *unblemish'd Fidelity* in the Kingdom) to partake with him in the King's Favour in any Degree; or to distinguish themselves in any *Affair of Trust, Honour or Profit*. This insatiable, engrossing Spirit and Impatience to see any Man gain Reputation or make his Fortune, besides himself, render'd him jealous of the Earl of *Bristol*; who was, at that Time, Ambassador extraordinary at the Court of *Spain*, and had in a Manner concluded the Treaty of Marriage with the *Infanta*, for which he was sent thither; for as the King's Heart was very much set on this Match, and *Buckingham* apprehended that the Successful Management of it would redound too much to the Honour of that Ambassador, he resolv'd to disappoint him by carrying the *Prince* in Person into *Spain*; in which he found it no hard Matter to persuade him, being naturally fond of Adventures; tho' there was some Difficulty in obtaining the King's Consent; but he had now got such an absolute Ascendency over Him, that he soon removed all Objections; and tho' he set out *incog*, yet he appeared there with a splendid Retinue, and put the Nation to a vast Expence.

As the sole Motive to this mad, unadvised Journey (for which any Man ought to have lost his Head) was private Envy to the Earl of *Bristol*; so *Buckingham* was no sooner arriv'd there with the *Prince*, than the same insolent Spirit and exorbitant Ambition engaged him in a personal Quarrel, not only with the

the *Ambassador*, but alio with the Duke of *Olivarez*, the *prime Minister* of *Spain*; which he was resolved to revenge on both of them, by returning into *England*, and breaking off the *Match*.

Accordingly, he came back with the *Prince*, not without great Difficulty and Hazard; and having got a Parliament call'd, engag'd them, by false Representations, and other unwarrantable Influences to dissuade the King from continuing the Treaty of *Marriage*, and immediately to declare War against *Spain*.

My Lord *Clarendon* tells us that, "He engag'd his old unwilling Master and the Kingdom in this War (not to mention the bold Journey to *Spain*, or the Breach of that Match) in a Time, when the *Crown* was poor, and the *People* more inclin'd to a bold Enquiry how it came to be so, than dutiful to provide for its Supply; and This only upon personal Animosities between Him and the Duke of *Olivarez*, the sole Favourite of that Court; and those Animosities from very trivial Provocations."

At the same Time, *Cranfield* Earl of *Middlesex*, Lord High Treasurer of *England* (who was one of *Buckingham's* Creatures, and nearly allied to him by Marriage) fell under his Grace's Displeasure, for having neglected to supply him with sufficient Sums of Money, during his Absence in *Spain*; and even presuming to dispute his Commands and appeal to the King, whose Ear he had now gained; and thought himself so firmly establish'd in his good Opinion, that he should not any longer stand in need of the Favourite's Support. But the Duke, upon his Return, being apprized of This, and finding the Parliament disposed to his Mind, was resolved to crush this bold Rival, and thereby deter others from presuming to interfere with him in his Majesty's Esteem.

For this Purpose, he prevailed on some leading Men in the House of Commons to carry up an impeachment.

peachment of *high Crimes and Misdemeanors* against him to the House of Lords; which they undertook with great Readiness, and went thro' with unusual Vigour.

However just or seasonable this Prosecution might be, yet it was generally thought very impolitical for a Man, in his Station or Circumstances, to set it on Foot; and the King himself was so averse to it, both on Account of the great Affection, which he bore to the *Earl*, and also of the bad Consequences, which he apprehended from such a Precedent, that finding the *Duke* positive in this Matter, he told him, in a Passion, "By G—d, *Stenny*, you are a *Fool*; and will " shortly repent this *Folly*, and will find that, in " this Fit of *Popularity*, you are making a *Rod*, with " which you will be scourged yourself; and turning, " in some Anger, to the *Prince*, told him, that he " would live to have his Belly full of *Parliament Im-*
" *peachments*.

But excessive Arrogance and Impatience of Emulation, which often overcome the most self-interested Prudence and political Foresight, had so much got the better of him, that he paid no Regard to these wholesome Admonitions, even from the Mouth of his indulgent Prince; whose Power in both Houses proved so much inferior to the *Duke's*, that the *Earl*, who was thought, at that Time, to have made a good *Defence*, was at last sentenced in an heavy *Fine*; a long *Imprisonment*; and rendered for ever afterwards incapable of sitting in the *House of Peers*.

Tho' the King's Affection was, in a great Measure, alienated from the *Duke*, on all these Accounts; and it was generally believed that he had recall'd the *Earl* of *Bristol* to get rid of his *imperious Administration*; yet " He was prevail'd on, by that arbitrary Minion, " to restrain the *Earl* upon his first Arrival, without " permitting him to come into his Presence."

Not-

Notwithstanding all This, the King was certainly grown weary of such an *insolent Favourite*; and was resolved either to dismiss him totally from his Service, or to retrench his unlimited Power; at least, this Opinion prevailed so much, that it induced several *great Men*, in both Houses, to withdraw their former *absolute Dependance* on him,

But the King's sudden Death (which, it was thought, happen'd very opportunely for him) and Prince *Charles's* Succession to the Throne procur'd him, as it were, a new Lease of Power, and re-instated him in his former Grandeur; for tho' the *Prince* could not have intirely forgot his *former Insolence* and *personal Indignities* to him; yet the *Duke*, by the Journey into *Spain*, which was very grateful to the *Prince*, and his great Power in his *Father's Court*, had found many Opportunities of extenuating or excusing that Part of his Conduct; which he did so effectually, "that he continued in the same Degree of Favour at the least with the *Son*, which He enjoy'd so many Years under the *Father*.——All Preferments in *Church* and *State* were given by him; all his *Kindred* and *Friends* promoted to the Degree in *Honour*, *Riches* or *Office*, that he thought fit; and all his *Enemies* and *Envyers* discountenanced, as he appointed."

But tho' he had thus firmly re-established himself in his *Master's* Favour and Confidence; yet he did not long retain his Credit with the *Parliament* and *People*; for the same over-bearing, impetuous Temper, which had hurried him, in the former Reign, into a War with *Spain*, upon a mere *personal Affront*, made him, in This, run as violently into a War with *France*; without any other Provocation, than a Disappointment in an *Amour*; which involved him in several fatal Difficulties, from which he could never extricate himself.

For these two Wars, thus unwarrantably enter'd upon, and the Defeats, which attended them, rais'd

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a general Consternation in the People ; and occasion'd general Clamours, Mutinies and Animosities against the Author of them. *Votes* and *Remonstrances* pass'd against him, in Parliament, as an *Enemy to his Country* ; the *Corrupter of the King* and *Betrayer of the Liberties of the People*. In short, all Mouths were open'd against him, and he seem'd to be, once more, hastening to his Destruction.

But, in the midst of this universal Indignation, a bold, obscure Russian, instigated by a false enthusiastical Zeal for his Country, stabb'd him to the Heart in a publick Assembly ; and in all probability snatch'd him from a more ignominious Fate, which afterwards befel the Earl of *Strafford* and others, who were engaged in the same kind of Measures ; and from which the King's Authority was not able to protect them.

Thus fell this *great Man*, who, as my Lord *Clarendon* assures us, “ had by long Practice obtain'd a
“ quick Conception and Apprehension of Business ;
“ and had the Habit of *speaking* very gracefully and
“ pertinently. He was, besides, of a most *flowing*
“ *Courtesy* and *Affability* to all Men, who made any
“ Address to him ; and so desirous to *oblige* them,
“ that he did not enough consider the *Value* of the
“ *Obligation* or the *Merit* of the *Person* he chose
“ to oblige ; from which much of his Misfortune resulted. — *Nay we are farther told*, that it was never known that the Temptation of *Money* sway'd
“ him to an *unjust* or *unkind* Thing.” — I mention This, because it seems somewhat extraordinary in a Man of his Character.

I must trespass on my Reader so far as add, by way of Corollary to this Paper, a little Fable out of *Osborne's Works* ; which I think not impertinent to the present Occasion. He tells us, “ that wise *Gundamar* being urged, by King *James*, to relate the
“ intrinsic Cause of the Duke of *Lerma's* Declension, from the most potent Favourite his Catholick
“ Majesty

“ Majesty ever raised, to a Condition so deplorable,
 “ as little if any thing was left, besides a *Cardinal's*
 “ Cap, able to shroud his Head from the Insults of
 “ the Populace ; He made him this metaphorical Pa-
 “ rable.

“ Two RATS, said he, *having tempted their For-*
 “ *tune in pursuit of Livelibood and Honour, fell upon*
 “ *an House of no less Receipt, than Plenty of Provi-*
 “ *sions ; where, for many Years, they lived in the*
 “ *greatest Sensuality their Wills and Wishes could*
 “ *prompt them to desire ; till overcome by an ambi-*
 “ *tious Thirst of advancing, together with Themselves,*
 “ *all that could pretend to their Alliance or Friendship,*
 “ *so much Spoil was committed, as did alarm the*
 “ *whole Family. and they becoming thus numerous,*
 “ *bad Traps and Poison laid for them in every*
 “ *Place.* C. D.

The END of VOL. I.



THE
HISTORY OF THE
CITY OF LONDON
FROM THE
FIRST
SETTLING OF THE
TOWN
TO THE
PRESENT
TIME
BY
JOHN STOW
1618





THE INDEX.

A.

A *Buses* ; in all Professions, page 13 — particularly
in *Physick*, *ibid.*

Academy (of *Musick*) a Propofal to make it useful to
the State, 140 — Its Treasure excellently managed
by Mr. *Kiplin*, 142.

Addreffes ; the Loyalty of them, 169 — from *Totnefs*,
ibid. — from *Lynn-Regis*, 170 — from *Shrewsbury*,
ib. — from *Hertfordfbire*, 224.

Algerines ; by what kept in Peace with *England*, 217

Alliance (*Hanover*) an Eulogium of it, 170.

Alvarez ; his Prefent to the *Craftfman*, 92.

Amburft (Mr.) taken up, on Sufpicion of writing the
Craftfman, 102.

Anne (Queen) the Glory of her Reign, 240.

Anti-Knottifts ; what, 225.

Athens ; how destroy'd, 175.

Avarice (the *Worm* of) 247.

A a 3

Augustus

The INDEX.

Augustus (Cæsar) strains the *Lex Majestatis* to the Punishment of *Libels*, 19 — his Conduct in that Matter condemn'd, *ibid.* — How he pav'd his Way to the Empire, 126.

B.

Bacon (Sir Francis) his Advice to Sir George Villars, Duke of *Buckingham*, how to behave Himself in Power, 51 — Concerning the *Church* and the *Bishops*, 52 — Concerning the *Law* and the *Judges*, *ibid.* — Concerning *Parliaments*, 53 — Concerning *Ministers*, *ib.* — Concerning *Ambassadors*, *ib.* — Concerning *War*, 54 — Concerning his Behaviour to the *King* and *Prince*, 55.

Bishops ; for what Qualities They ought to be prefer'd, 52 — The Character of a seditious German Bishop, 170.

Bribery ; the Mischiefs of it, 123 — defended, 189 — A Project to prevent it, 225.

Bristol (Earl of) the Duke of *Buckingham* grows jealous of Him, 274.

Britannica ; her Letter to the *Craftsman* in Defence of her Sex, 236.

Britannicus ; his Letter to Mr. *D'Anvers*, concerning the publick *Debts*, 68 — A second Letter upon the same Subject, 85.

Briton (Will.) his Letter to Mr. *D'Anvers*, concerning our Colonies in the *West-Indies*, 146.

Briton (Robert) his Letter to Mr. *D'Anvers*, concerning *Esquires*, 266.

Buckingham (Villars, Duke of) Sir Francis Bacon's Advice to Him, 51 — an absolute Prime Minister, 133 — An Account of his Rise, Conduct and Death, 272.

Buckingham (Sheffield, Duke of) his Letter to Dr. *Tillotson*, in Justification of Himself, Page 154

Bur.

The INDEX.

Burnet (Bishop) condemns Himself for meddling in
State Affairs, 171.

C.

C*Aius* (*Gracchus*) his Character, 139—his Method of subduing his Passion, *ibid.*

Camilick; his first Vision, 92.

Carlos (*Don*) the Author of the *Enquiry's* dreadful Apprehensions of that young Prince, 84—A *Consolatory Epistle* to Him, 145.

Caroline (Queen) her Wisdom and Piety, 241.

Cartbage; how destroy'd, 175.

Catherine (of *Medicis*) her Conduct, *ib.*

Catholicon (*Aureum Basilicum*) some Account of it, 16—Mr. *D'Anvers's* Defence of Himself for recommending it, 34.

Charles (the *First*, King of *England*) some Account of the Parties in his Reign, 99.

Charles (the *Second*, King of *England*) some Account of his Reign, 150—his Alliance with *France* condemn'd, 151.

Charta (*Magna*) a Vision of it, 92.

Church; how fill'd with worthy Persons, 117.

Churchmen, ought not to meddle with temporal Affairs, 171.

Cicero (the famous *Roman Orator*) some Account of him, 260—*Salust's* Declamation against Him, 261.

Civics; his Letter to Mr. *D'Anvers*, concerning the *East-India Company* and Mr. *Ecclestone*, 62.

Clarendon (Earl of) his Remark on *corrupt Judges*, 64—his Character of *Weston*, Earl of *Portland*, 136—his *sudden Acquisitions* made an Article of Impeachment against him, 144—His Account of *Villars*, Duke of *Buckingham*, 273.

Clifford (*Lord-Treasurer*) his Character, 151—his Conduct condemn'd, *ibid.*—shuts up the *Exchequer*, 153.

Clodius

The INDEX.

- Cladius* (and *Cicero* ; a Pamphlet so called) some Remarks upon it, 188.
- Coalition* (of *Parties*) what ; and how to be desired, 248.
- Colonies* (*West-India*) an Account of their Condition, 146—Their Importance, *ibid.*—A farther Account of their Condition, 179.
- Companies* (*Trading*) see *East-India*.
- Conscience* (the *Worm* of) Mr. M——e's Proposal to bring it away, 244.
- Controversy* ; a new Method of it, 107.
- Corruptions* in all Professions, 13 — particularly in *Physick*, *ibid.* — defended, 188 — a Project to prevent it, 224 — another Project to prevent it, 270 — the Mischiefs of it, 123.
- Court* ; the Reasonableness and Profitableness of conforming to it, 182.
- Craftsman* ; the Design of that Paper, 1, &c. why so call'd, 5 — Some farther Account of its Design, 104.
- Cranfield* (Earl of *Middlesex*) falls under the Displeasure of the Duke of *Buckingham*, 275.
- Creatures* (*Court*) their abject Condition and Behaviour describ'd, 108.
- Credit* (*publick*) some Observations upon it, in Answer to the *London Journal*, 85.
- Cremæsus Cordus* ; accus'd of *Libelling*, 22 — His Speech in the *Senate*, *ibid.*
- Cræsus* ; his Advice to *Cyrus*, 175.
- Cyrus* ; some Account of his Conduct, 174.

D.

- D**'*Anvers* (*Caleb*) some Account of Him and his Design, 1, &c.—and of *Robin*, his *Coachman*, 3 — misrepresented in a Paper call'd the *Country Gentleman*,

The INDEX.

- Gentleman, ibid*—The Faculty of *Physick* exasperated against Him, 34—His Defence, *ibid.*—hath no Design against the *present Ministers*, 45—defends Himself against the Charge of *Irony* and *Innuendos*, 103—Some farther Account of his Design, 104—His Resolution, 106—defends the *Ministry* against the Charge of neglecting Men of *Merit* and *Learning*, 115—His Declaration to his Correspondents, 145—A Complaint against his *foreign Stewards* and *domestick Servants*, 146—Some farther Account of his Design, 150—A *political Physician*, 159—An Account of his *Family*, and of their Conduct, 166—Reproaches upon him answer'd, *ibid.*—His Reflections upon Mr. *Palm's Memorial*, 168—A farther Complaint against his *Servants*, 178—Said not to be the Author of the *Craftsman*, 180—The Success of his Writings, and the contemptible Arguments of his Adversaries, 183—Shews the People's Apprehensions about *Gibraltar* to be groundless, 200—His Observations on Mr. *M——e's* new *Worm-Powder*, 246—His Remarks on the Prodigies of the Year 1727—254.
- Debts (publick)* the Design of a *certain Essay* upon them, 68—Some Remarks upon it, *ibid.*
- Decyphering* (the Art of) its Perfection, 230.
- Defection* (*consider'd*, a Pamphlet so call'd) some Extracts from it, 192—Several Answers to it quoted, 206.
- Despair*; the good Effects of it, 161.
- De Wit*; his Fate, 132—his plain Manner of Living, 156.
- Dullness*; a Method of acquiring it, 91.

E.

- E**agle (*three-leg'd*) an Account of it, 257.
- Ear-Knots; the use of them, 225.
- East-India (*Company*) a *Fraud* said to be discover'd at

The INDEX.

- at one of their Sales, 26 — Proceedings upon it in their *General Court*, *ib.* — Farther Remarks upon it, 62 — Some *Queries* offer'd, concerning the Management of the Company, 65 — The Pride, Grandeur and Riches of their *Governors*, 67 — Some Account of their *Screen-Master General*, and his Conduct, 75.
- Ecclestone* (Mr.) charg'd with a *Fraud* in a Sale of *East-India* Goods, 27 — Some Account of that Affair, and of the Proceedings upon it, *ib.* — Some farther Remarks upon it, 62.
- Elizabeth* (Queen) some Account of the Conduct of her Reign, 52 — Her Wisdom farther exemplify'd, 240.
- Embassadors* ; how to be chosen, 53.
- Empires* ; their Vicissitudes and Revolutions, 96.
- English* (*John*) his Proposal for preventing *Corruption*, 224 — His second Proposal. 270.
- Enquiry* (*into the Reasons of the Conduct of Great-Britain*) written in Imitation of *Don Quixote* and *Gulliver's Voyages*, 79 — Some Observations upon it, *ibid.* — The Author's Scheme for paying our Debts by running farther in Debt, 84 — His Apprehensions upon Account of *Don Carlos*, *ibid.* — Some Remarks on his Assertion, that *Satire is easier than Praise*, 102 — Contradicted by *Pliny*, *ibid.*
- Esquire* ; *Englishmen* remarkably fond of that Title, 266 — An Essay upon it, *ibid.*
- Essay* (upon the *publick Debts*) the Design of that Book, 68 — Some Remarks upon it, *ibid.*
- Exchequer* ; shut up, 153.

F.

- F**etter-Lane ; a young Man brought to Bed of a Girl there, Page 255.
- France* ; why an Alliance with that Kingdom is unnatural to *England*, 111 — King *Charles* the Second's

The INDEX.

cond's Alliance with it condemn'd, 150—The Con-
sequences of it, 151 — The general Antipathy of
the *English* against that Nation, 153 — In what
their Fidelity will appear, 205 — Our Rivals in
Trade, 216.

Francklin (Mr.) taken up, on Suspicion of printing
the *Craftsman*, 102.

Frugality, condemn'd, 188,

G.

G*Alba* (the *Roman* Emperor) the Cause of his
Death, 190.

Gibraltar ; its Importance differently represented, 112

—The Apprehensions of the People, upon that Ac-
count, proved to be groundless, 200 — The *Importance*
of that Place explain'd by an Induction of
Particulars, 215 — The Reasons and Arguments
urg'd for its Restitution expos'd, 219.

Godalmin ; the *Rabbit Birth* of that Place justify'd
and explain'd, 256.

Government ; how it ought to be supported upon ex-
traordinary Occasions, 226.

Governors (*East-India*) their Pride, Grandeur and
Riches, 67.

Gracchi ; the Character of the two Brothers, 139.

Greece ; the Policy of that State, in suffering none of
her Members to become too popular, 122.

Gundamour ; his Fable, 279.

H.

H*anover* (*Alliance*) an Eulogium of it, 170.

Henry, (*Orator*) his Design commended, 39—
An Account of his Oration upon *Horace*, 40—Far-
ther commended, 43 — Vindicated, against the
Charge of abusing *Horace*, by *Tim. Shallock*, 56.

Winter

The INDEX.

- Hinter (Jack)* his Letter to Mr. D'Anvers, 44.
Hoadley (Bishop) an Advocate for the *Liberty of the Press*, 21—His Observation concerning *Places at Court*, 130.
Holland; the Occasion of its Greatness, 156 — The Rigour and Impositions of that Government at present, 157 — Why the People submit to it, *ibid.*—How rescued from Destruction, 162.
Horace; Mr. Henley, the *Orator's* Account of him, 40—somewhat *fat* and very *dirty*, *ibid.*—little better than a *Sloven*, *ibid.*—a *Swine*, *ibid.*—His *Fortune* originally small, *ibid.*—Married a *Woman of Lombardy* with a large *Fortune*, 41—*Lewd* and *choleric*, *ibid.*—A *comical* little, *laughing Fellow*, and a *great Lover of Bawdry*, *ibid.*—One of his *smutty Songs*, *ibid.*—*Sordidly covetous*, *ibid.*—An *Exempt* if the *Beef-eaters*, 42—*Secretary of the Treasury*, *ibid.*—Sent *Ambassador* to *Gaul*, *ibid.*—Grows *cleaner* and *sprucer*, *ibid.*—Some Design of making Him *Secretary of State*, *ibid.*—but misses it by his *extreme Modesty*, *ibid.*—Defended against all these *Charges* by *Tim. Shallow*, 55.
Horace; sent to *Hanover* with a Scheme for the *Parliament's* sitting, during the *King's Absence*, 193.

I.

- I***nnuendos*; some Observations on them, Page 103
Influence; the Folly of it in *Statesmen*, 134—especially in a *popular Assembly*, 139.
Interest (of *Money*) some Reflections upon it, 89.
Journal (*London*) some Remarks upon it, 68 — Further Remarks upon it, 85.
Irony, describ'd, 103—Some Observations on it, *ibid.*
Itinerarium (Theologicum) a Book so call'd, 120.
Judges; what sort of Men They ought to be, 52—The Earl of *Clarendon's* Observation on *corrupt Judges*, 64.

K. King

The INDEX.

K.

KING (Dr. Robert) his *golden Specifick* recommended, 16 — An Account of its Cures, and Mr. *D'Anvers's* Conference with the Doctor, 34 — He cures two eminent Lawyers, 37 — Some Account of them and their Case, *ibid.* — A farther Account of his Remedies, 180.

Kingdoms ; their Vicissitudes and Revolutions. 96.

Kiplin (Mr.) his excellent Character and Conduct, 141.

Knots (Ear) the Use of them, 225.

Knottists ; what, *ibid.*

L.

LAWS ; ought to bear the Name of Those, who propose them, 270.

Lawyers ; (two eminent ones) cured by Dr. KING, 37 — Some Account of Them and their Case, *ibid.*

Law ; the Observation of it recommended, 52.

Learning (the Decay of it) how accounted for, 115.

— The Reasons given for it ridicul'd, *ibid.* — How promoted, 116 — How discourag'd, 117 — The present Ministry great Patrons of Learning, *ibid.*

Leicester (Earl of) said to be a *Broker*, 144.

Lerma (Duke of) his Fall, 278.

Leiborgy (political) the Causes and bad Effects of that Dilemper, 158.

Letters ; from *Mercator* to the *Craftsman*, concerning a Fraud, said to be discover'd at a Sale of the *East-India Company*, 25 — From *Jack Hinder* to the same, 44 — From *Tim. Shallow* to the same, in Defence of *Horace* and and Mr. Orator *Henley*, 56 — From *Civicius* to the same, concerning the *East-India Company* and Mr. *Ecclestone*, 62 — From *Britannicus* to the same, concerning the *publick Debts*, 68

B b

— From

The INDEX.

- From *Urbanicus* to the same, concerning the *East-India Company*, 75—A second Letter from *Urbanicus* to the *Craftsman* concerning *publick Credit*, 85—From *Will. Briton* to the same, concerning our Colonies in the *West-Indies*, 146—To the same, from an anonymous Hand, concerning *Operas* and *Luxury*, 173 — To the same, concerning *Colonies* and *Plantations*, 178—From *John English* to the same, containing a Project to prevent *Corruption*, 224—From *Britannica* to the same, in Defence of her Sex, 236—From *John M—re* to the same, with an Account of his new *Worm Powder*, 242—From 'Squire *Briton*, to the same concerning *Esquireship*, 266—The Practice of *opening Letters* at the *Post-Office* examined, 228.
- Libels*; not defin'd by the *Law*, 11—Worthy Men prosecuted under the Pretence of *Libelling*, *ibid.*—First punished in *Rome*, by *Augustus*, under Colour of the *Lex Majestatis*, 19—*Cremutius Cordus* accus'd of *Libelling*, 22—His Speech to the Senate, 23.
- Liberty*; the Blessings of it, 92—How it ought to be asserted, 161.
- Loans* (of *Money*) some Methods of managing them, 89.
- Luxury*; the Mischiefs of it, 124—Farther explain'd, 164—Encourag'd by *wicked Ministers*, *ibid.*—Farther explain'd, 173—It ruins the *Persians*, *ibid.*—The *Spartans* and *Romans*, 174 — *Carthage*, *Athens* and *Lydia*, 175. — Encourag'd by *Pericles*, *Tiberius*, *Catherine of Medicis* and *Cyrus*, *ibid.*
- Lydians*; how destroy'd, *ibid.*
- Lynn-Regis*; the loyal Address of that Corporation, 170.

The INDEX.

M.

- M** *Ajestatis (Lex)* some Account of it, *Page* 19.
Manufactures (woollen) their declining Condition, 87—The Reason of it, *ibid.*
Map (of the World) Proposals for printing a more accurate one, 78.
Masquerades ; the Danger of them, 176.
Medicis (*Catharine* of) her Conduct, 175.
Men (*great*) *Seneca's* Observations upon them, 46 — Mistaken by the generality of the World, 48—Their Methods of raising themselves in this Age, 49 — The Character of a *truly great Man*, 50 — How their *Creatures* and *Tools* are oblig'd to behave, 108.
Middlesex (*Earl of*) falls under the Displeasure of the Duke of *Buckingham*, 275 — Impeach'd and punish'd, *ibid.*
Ministers ; *Sir Francis Bacon's* Instructions to them upon several Parts of Government, 51 — Advice to Them, 132 — An Apology for Them, 150 — How and when They ought to be call'd to Account, 186—The great *Success* and *Ability* of the *present Ministers*, 45—*Mr. D'Anvers* defends himself against the Charge of abusing them by *Irony* and *Innuendos*, 103—Great Encouragers of *Learning*, 117—Farther defended by *Mr. D'Anvers*, 164—How defended by the *Craftsman's* Adversaries, 183 — Abus'd some Years ago, for *Resigning* their Employments, 192 — Charg'd with *ENGROSSING*, and embroiling publick Affairs, *ibid.*—The former Condition of ONE of them, 193 — Gets incredible Sums for *Himself*, his *Relations* and *Friends*, *ibid.*—His *Ingratitude*, *ibid.*—Voted guilty of *Corruption* and *Breach of Trust* by the House of Commons, 194—Sent to *Prison*, *ibid.*—Offers 90,000 *l.* for one Purchase, *ibid.*—Kept an Office in the *Strand*,

The INDEX.

for selling *Places, Grants and Reversions*, 195—
 Charg'd with being in the *Swedish Plot*, *ibid.*—
 Makes Money of the *Rebels*, *ibid.*—Grows *impu-*
dent, and thinks that *Punishment* will make Him *po-*
popular, 196—Calls the *King's Service* a *Burthen too*
heavy for a Man of Honour to bear, 198—An *Ene-*
my to publick Credit, which increases upon his be-
 ing turn'd out, *ibid.* Calls the Ministry a *Faction*,
ibid.—Charg'd with acting out of *Spleen, Prejudice,*
Self-interest, Ambition, Disappointment and *Re-*
venge, *ibid.*—His Answer and Vindication against
 all these heavy Charges, 206—The *present Mini-*
sters, their Eulogium, 223.—(*Prime Ministers*)
 what, 128—dangerous to a *free People*. *ibid.*—to
 the *Prince*, 130—and to *Himself*, 132.
Money; the Power of it, 125.
Monitor (a Paper so call'd) against the *Liberty of the*
Press, 107.
M—re (*J—bn*) his Letter to the *Craftsman*, and
 Proposal to cure a *wounded Conscience*, 242—An
 Account of his new *Worm-powder* for this Purpose,
ibid.
Musick (*Italian*) the Danger of it, 176.

N.

Navigation; a new Discovery in the Art of it,
 271.
Norfolk (*Troop*) some Account of them, 199.

O.

Omens; a Discourse upon them, 254.
Operas; a Discourse upon them, 173—The
 Danger of them, *ibid.*
Orange (Prince of) preserves *Holland*, 163.
Offend (*Trade* of) differently represented, 113—Of
 what Importance to *England*, 202.

P. *Palm*

The INDEX.

P.

- P**alm (Mr.) his *Memorial* condemn'd, *Page* 168
 —Drawn up by a *German Bishop*, 169.
Panegyrick; why not so easy as *Satire*, 102 — *Pliny's*
 Observation upon it, *ibid.*
Parallels; the use of them, 187.
Parliaments; the true use of them, 53.
Parties; their *Revolutions*, 97 — Some Account of
 the *Parties* in the Reign of *Charles the First*, 99.
 —A *Coalition* of them, what; and how to be de-
 fired, 248.
Patriotism; the Methods us'd to bring it into Con-
 tempt, 114.—*Treason* in Disguise, 182.
Penioners; ought to be distinguish'd by some pub-
 lick Mark, 225.—A Project for this Purpose, *ibid.*
Pericles; encourages *Luxury*, 175.
Persians; how ruin'd, 173.
Perspectives (*political*) recommended, 61 — The use
 of them, *ibid.*
Philippeaux (Count) a Complaint against Him, 178.
Physick; the Abuses of it, 13.
Pitch-pipe; the use of it, 140.
Places (at Court) the Magick of them, 212.
Plantations (in the *West-Indies*) an Account of their
 Condition, 146.—Their Importance, *ibid.*—A Far-
 ther Account of their Condition, 179.
Pleasure; the Danger of it, 173.
Pliny; his Observation on *Panegyrick*, 102.
Policician; ought to have no *Passions*, 133.—Especial-
 ly *Insolence*, and *Impetuosity of Temper*, 134.
Popularity; defin'd, 121.—The Excellence of it, *ibid.*
false Popularity, what, *ibid.*—The Mischiefs of it,
ibid.—Different Methods of acquiring it, *ibid.*—*Au-*
gustus paves his way to the *Empire* by it, 126.
Porch (*Solomon*) his *political Perspectives* recommend-
 ed, 61.—The use of them, *ibid.*

The INDEX.

- Portland* (*Wesson*, Earl of) his Character and Behaviour in Power, 136.
- Post-Office*; the Practice of opening Letters there examin'd, 228.
- Poverty*; a Mark of *Honesty*, 144.
- Prelum Triumphans*; a Book so call'd, 140.
- Press*; the *Liberty* of it explain'd and asserted, 7 — Encourag'd by all wise Nations, 17, &c. — By the whole Body of the *Whigs*, 21 — Written against in a Paper, call'd the *Monitor*, 107.
- Pride*; the Force and Effects of it, 266.
- Prime-Minister*; what, 128 — Dangerous to a free People, *ibid.* — To the *Prince*, 130 — And to Himself, 132.
- Prodigies*; a Discourse upon them, 254.
- Proteus*; the Meaning of that Allegory, 96.
- Prussia* (King of) his Strength differently represent-ed, 112.

Q.

- Q** *Ueries*; concerning the Management of the *East-India Company*, 65.

R.

- R** *ATS*; a Fable of two, 279.
- Rebels* (*Scotch*) why brought to Town to be tried, 195.
- Religion* (*Christian*) how first instituted, 97 — How perverted, *ibid.* — (*Mahometan*) by what founded, 97 — How maintain'd at present, 98.
- Resigners* (*vindicated*, a Pamphlet so call'd) some Extracts out of it, 212.
- Revolutions*; of all Things, 96 — Of *States*, *Kingdoms* and *Empires*, *ibid.* — Of *Parties*, 97.
- Ridicule*; the Mischief of turning *serious Things* into *Ridicule*, 79 — When this Custom was first introduced,

The INDEX

- ced, and by whom, *ibid.*—A remarkable Instance of it in a Book, call'd, *An Enquiry*, &c. *ibid.*—Some Observations on that Book, 80, &c.
- Riches* (*immense*) a Proof of Guilt, 144.
- Ripperda* (Duke of) his Malignancy against the King of Great-Britain, 82.
- Robin* (Mr. D'Anvers's Coachman) some Account of Him, 3, &c.
- Robinocracy*; destroy'd, 197.
- Rome*; the Policy of that State in suffering none of her Members to become too popular, 122.
- Romans*; how ruin'd, 174.
- Ruiter* (Vice-Admiral of Holland) his plain Manner of Living, 156.
- Ruptures*; *golden Trusses* invented to cure them, 74.
- Russia* (the late Empress of) her Wisdom and Conduct, 240.

S.

- S***alust*; his Declamation against *Cicero*, 261.
- Sarum* (Bishop of) an Advocate for the *Liberty of the Press*, 21 — His Observation concerning *Places at Court*, 130.
- Satire*; why easier than *Praise* or *Panegyrick*, 102.
- Satirical-Writings*; how encourag'd, 119.
- Scheme* (*honest*) a Book so call'd 270.
- Screen-Master, General*, (of the *East-India Company*) Some Account of Him and his Conduct, 75.
- Screen* (*screen'd*) 165.
- Seneca*; his Observations on *great Men*, 46.
- Shaftsbury* (Lord) his Observation concerning *Writers*, 120.
- Shallow* (*Timothy*) his Letter to Mr. D'Anvers, in Defence of *Horace* and Orator *Henley*, 55.
- Shallows* (the Family of) *rising Men*, *ibid.*
- Shrewsbury*; the loyal Address of that Corporation, 170.

Spartans;

The INDEX.

Spartans ; how ruin'd, 174.

Specifick (golden) some Account of it, 16, 34—A farther Account of it, 180.

States ; their Vicissitudes and Revolutions, 96.

Statesman ; ought to have *no Passions*, 133 — Especially to avoid *Insolence* and *Impetuosity of Temper*, 134.

Steele (Sir *Richard*) opposes Men in Power, 21.

Stocks ; how they are manag'd, 89.

Stock-jobbing ; how it is of Advantage to the Nation, 111.

Sybaris (a Town in *Italy*) the Fate of it, 177.

T.

Temple (Sir *William*) his Observation on the Trade of the *Netherlands*, 64—His wife and honest Conduct, 151—His Reasons for the Greatness of *Holland*, 156.

Tiberius (Gracchus) his Character, 139.

Tiberius (the Emperor) encourages *Luxury*, 175.

Tools (of a great Man) how they are oblig'd to behave, 108.

Tories ; some Account of them, 100—Their Character of a *Whig* condemn'd, 250.

Totness ; the loyal Address of that Corporation, 169.

Trade ; how it suffers by a War with *Spain*, 87.

Treasurer ; the Character of an honest one, 141.

Trusses (golden) for preventing *Ruptures*, 74.

Tulip (Monsieur) rescues his Country from Destruction by his gallant Conduct, 162.

U.

Urbanicus ; his Letter to Mr. *D'Anvers*, concerning the *East-India Company*, 75.

The INDEX.

V.

- V** *icissitude* (of all Things) 96.
Villars (Duke of Buckingham) Sir Francis Bacon's Advice to him, 51—An absolute *Prime-Minister*, 133—An Account of his Rise, Conduct, and Death, 272.
Visson (of Camillick) 92.

W.

- W** — *le* (R——t, Esquire; an *Answer* to a Pamphlet, intituled the *Character and Conduct of that Gentleman*) some Extracts out of it, 196
 —A Panegyrick upon Him, 212.
Wars; Sir Francis Bacon's Opinion upon them, 54.
Westminster; a School there recommended, 265.
Weston (Earl of Portland) his Character and Behaviour in Power, 136.
Whigs; Advocates for the *Liberty of the Press*, 21 — Some Account of their Conduct in the Reigns of *Charles the First* and *Second*, 100—How alter'd since, *ibid.*—Their Antipathy to the *French Nation*, 153 — Their Character of a *Tory* condemn'd, 250.
Wolfey (Cardinal) some Account of his *Insolence in Power*, 46, 135.
Woman-kind; an Essay in their Behalf, 236.

